

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003516

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: WOMEN ACTIVISTS REACT TO DRAFT CONSTITUTION

REF: BAGHDAD 3382

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY. Women activists expressed to Ambassador on August 24 their frustration over the new constitution's implications for women's rights. The Ambassador underscored that the U.S. had pushed hard on this issue and achieved some compromise -- the removal of a time limit to the 25 percent quota for female representation in the legislature and language referring to Islam as "a" main source instead of "the" main source. The women continue to object to language on personal status, the role of Islam, and the limitation of quota requirements for female representation in the legislature. They have threatened to lobby against the new constitution, but recognize that they do not speak for all Iraqi women, many of whom will not oppose the new draft. END SUMMARY.

-----  
AMBASSADOR OUTLINES U.S. SUPPORT ON WOMEN'S ISSUES  
-----

2. (C) At an August 24 meeting with Ambassador, key women activists expressed concern about the role of Islam in the constitution. The activists asserted that, even with language stating that no legislation can contradict the principles of democracy or the rights outlined in other parts of the constitution, religious clerics would play a large role in determining what this means.

3. (C) The women -- TNA member and Failee Kurd Samia Aziz, Gender Advisor to President Talibani Selma Jabou, and women's activists Hanaa Edwar and Nisreen al-Amidi -- also strenuously objected to language on the regulation of personal status. They stated that even with a civil option women, especially those uneducated about their rights, would be forced to accept Shari'a by their male family members. Damluji also stated that the constitution would not stop sheiks marrying very young girls.

4. (C) The Ambassador noted the political realities of the TNA. He emphasized that U.S. efforts had resulted in the removal of term limits for the 25 percent quota for female representation in the legislature. He also pointed to the fact that, not only was there compromise on the role of Islam (from "the" main source to "a" main source), but also that the U.S. has insisted on the inclusion of language requiring that no law contradict the principles of democracy or the basic rights provided for in the constitution.

5. (C) COMMENT: We can expect some women activists to speak out against the constitution. We will continue to engage them, but they may well seek to mobilize their networks to lobby voters against the constitution. At the same time, they themselves recognize that they are not the voice of all Iraqi women. Many Iraqi women will not oppose the Islamist approach (see ref). END COMMENT  
Khalilzad